



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

HANS RIEMER
COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Statement on the County's FY19 operating and capital budget agreement
May 17, 2018

Today we have reached agreement on the County's FY19 Budget. I want to thank all my colleagues for your hard work and collaboration throughout this process. Working together, and with our remarkable staff, we have produced a budget that is restrained and responsible, does not raise taxes, and ensures the County will continue to provide the superb services that so many of our residents appreciate so much.

I credit the County Executive with making many great decisions in his budget, including fully funding Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Fully funding MCPS was my highest priority and I know was very important to my colleagues as well.

Thanks to our unusual fiscal circumstances, however, the County Executive's budget presented some daunting challenges in other areas, particularly with Public Safety.

Recognizing that this is a time for fiscal discipline, we worked to stretch our resources to meet as much of the need as we could. Most of the list that I put together, in consultation with my colleagues, focused on restoring services that we all deem to be critical.

In particular, we were able to restore \$6.7 million to Fire and Rescue Services that was cut by the County Executive – this one service area is nearly one half of what we approved on the reconciliation list for FY19.

People take for granted that when their house is on fire, or when their spouse has a heart attack, that someone will respond quickly. We prioritized that quick response time in this budget.

Beyond public safety, our budget is about kids. In addition to fully funding the school's request, we made significant progress funding services that are critical for our children.

Reflecting a strong council interest in early childhood, we added almost \$1 million to expand half-day preschool to full day, in addition to the \$2.5 million expansion that MCPS proposed in its budget. This significant step forward follows on last year's effort, which converted 200 full day Head Start slots to full day in MCPS and added 40 new slots at Centro Nia. We are now on the precipice of converting all half day pre-k slots to full day, setting the table to begin expanding our pre-k services outright.

We expanded our academic and parent-engagement focused after school program, Excel Beyond the Bell, to two new elementary schools, continuing to build a program that the Council and Executive have worked together to build expand rapidly over the last several years.

We restored funding for a community health nurse who works with vulnerable, abused children, restored funding for Care for Kids, our community health clinic program for low income children, funded a drop-in center for homeless youth, expanded the smart sacks program to provide meals for kids, and

added capacity for Montgomery Cares to provide health care for the uninsured.

We added funds for three new school resource officers, at the middle school level – a new focus for that successful program.

Recognizing crucial quality of life issues, we restored some proposed cuts to Parks, including an urban parks initiative, as well as to fund our planning program for future master plans, so that we can continue our important mission to reinvent how we live and grow. We supported our nonprofits and we deepened our strategic economic development programs in biotech.

And for our magnificent college, the Council's budget funds 99.6% of the College's tax supported request, and includes an increase of \$2.75 million or 2% in local funding over FY18. It is the Council's intent that College use its FY19 appropriation to fully-fund compensation and benefit agreements for its employees, and take any reductions needed to align its budget with the approved funding level from planned FY19 program enhancements instead. The Council recognizes that final decisions on these issues fall under the authority of the Board of Trustees.

Turning to our capital budget, once again our choices were made within a context of fiscal discipline. We reduced our borrowing amount and scheduled a continually declining borrowing level, an important step that we hope the next council will adhere to.

Despite a smaller overall construction budget, we increased the share going to school construction, including responding to the voices of the parents and students at Lee Middle School, accelerates planning for Dufief Elementary School, and funds \$25 million more for School construction than the Executive originally recommended.

We also added an exciting new project, a new facility for STEM learning and innovation for kids, partnered with the KID Museum and the City of Rockville, to be located right in the heart of the county, near the Twinbrook Metro.

We shifted transportation priorities towards bike and pedestrian infrastructure, added planning dollars for Bus Rapid Transit, and shifted our bus fleet purchases towards electric vehicles.

None of this would have been possible, of course, without our remarkable staff. I want to thank our new Council Staff Executive Director, Marlene Michaelson, who has ably led us through her first budget at the helm. Jacob Sesker, Linda McMillan and the rest of our hardworking staff provided excellent professional support, and I am grateful for their contributions as well. But this was truly a team effort, with important contributions not only from all of the professional staff but also the dedicated members of every council member's office. Great work, team.

I also want to acknowledge that for four of my colleagues, this will be their final budget, as a Councilmember anyway. Their accomplishments speak for themselves, but their legacy will be marked this year in our new budget as it has in every budget during their time at this dais.

Finally, I would like to recognize Steve Farber. Our work this year benefited greatly from the incredible organization he built.

With appreciation, I will now turn to my colleagues, who will highlight many of the significant initiatives included in this budget.